

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 4129

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, SNAR, TH, BM  
SUBJ: THAI-BURMA RELATIONS AND THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT

REF: BANGKOK 33887

SUMMARY: WE AGREE ON THE DESIRABILITY OF BETTER THAI-BURMA RELATIONS, AND HAVE PERIODICALLY ASSESSED THE POSSIBILITY OF DOING SOMETHING TO HELP IMPROVE THEM. IN THIS CONNECTION, FOR EXAMPLE, AMBASSADOR VANCE SOUNDED OUT HOME MINISTER U KO KO DURING HIS RECENT VISIT. THE GUB STANDARD RESPONSE HAS BEEN, "IF THE THAI REALLY WANT BETTER RELATIONS, LET THEM STOP GIVING SANCTUARY TO BURMA INSURGENTS." WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN BANGKOK'S ESTIMATE OF THE RTG POSITION ON THIS FUNDAMENTAL ASPECT. THIS ASIDE, WE HAVE ALSO RELUCTANTLY CONCLUDED THE GUB WOULD BE UNRECEPTIVE OR EVEN HOSTILE TO THE KIND OF MEDIATION ROLE SUGGESTED BY WONG. THEY THINK THEY HAVE PEOPLE WITH ALL THE EXPERIENCE AND ABILITIES REQUIRED TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE THAI, IF THE THAI ARE READY TO DEAL; AND THEY WOULD BE SUSPICIOUS OF THAI MOTIVES IN SEEKING TO INVOLVE US. END SUMMARY.

1. ALONG WITH RTG FOREIGN AFFAIRS UNDER SECRETARY WONG, WE HAVE SENSED IN THE NEW RTG ANTI-NARCOTICS CAMPAIGN  
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A POTENTIAL OPENING FOR IMPROVING THAI-BURMA RELATIONS, AT LEAST IN THE LIMITED SPHERE OF NARCOTICS. REGULAR LIAISON BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ON OPERATIONS AGAINST BORDER AREA REFINERIES AND TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS WOULD MATERIALLY ENHANCE LONG-TERM PROSPECTS OF COPING WITH THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE DRUG TRAFFIC. SINCE THE

BURMESE RECOGNIZE IN PRINCIPLE THE BENEFITS OF COOPERATION WITH THE THAI ON NARCOTICS CAMPAIGN AS A MATTER OF HIGH NATIONAL PRIORITY, IT WOULD SEEM LOGICAL FOR THEM AT LEAST TO MEET THE THAI HALF WAY.

2. WE HAVE BEEN "TALKING UP" WITH THE BURMESE THE EVIDENCE REPORTED BY EMBASSY BANGKOK OF THE NEW RTG'S COMMITMENT TO A STRONGER NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORT. FOR EXAMPLE, DURING HIS NOVEMBER VISIT AMBASSADOR VANCE RAISED THIS WITH HOME MINISTER U KO KO, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GUB CENTRAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD, AND WE HAVE REPEATEDLY MENTIONED IT TO OTHER OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS MATTERS. MOREOVER, AT OUR SUGGESTION, THAI CHARGE PRADEEP SOCHIRATNA HAS BEEN STRESSING TO THE BURMESE THAT THE RTG IS MOVING MORE VIGOROUSLY AGAINST THE TRAFFICKERS AND THAT THIS COULD LEAD TO IMPROVED THAI-BURMA RELATIONS.

3. THE BURMESE MISTRUST OF THE THAI, HOWEVER, REMAINS VERY PROFOUND. THEY POINT TO WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO BE DEEP-SEATED AND HIGH-LEVEL CORRUPTION WITHIN THE THAI POLICE AND MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS, AND THEY ARE SKEPTICAL THAT THIS CORRUPTION HAS YET BEEN ELIMINATED -- THUS MAKING IT (IN THEIR VIEW) RISKY TO SHARE WITH THE THAI ANY INFORMATION, PARTICULARLY OF AN OPERATIONAL NATURE. MORE FUNDAMENTALLY, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE NOT YET SEEN EVIDENCE THAT THE THAI ARE WILLING TO TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION AGAINST THE ANTI-GUB INSURGENT GROUPS, E.G., BY DENYING THEM SANCTUARY AND OTHER FORMS OF AID. FROM THE BURMESE POINT OF VIEW, THIS IS THE CRUCIAL  
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FACTOR WHICH HAS LONG PREVENTED IMPROVED THAI-BURMA RELATIONS. UNLESS THEY HAVE CONVINCING EVIDENCE OF A CHANGE IN THIS REGARD, THE BURMESE ARE MOST UNLIKELY TO COOPERATE MEANINGFULLY WITH THE THAI IN NARCOTICS CONTROL OR ANYTHING ELSE.

4. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY BANGKOK THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT SORT OF INTERMEDIARY ROLE THE USG MIGHT USEFULLY PLAY BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, OTHER THAN TO CONTINUE TO KEEP THE BURMESE INFORMED OF WHAT THE THAI ARE DOING AGAINST THE TRAFFICKING GROUPS AND OTHER INSURGENTS. UNTIL THEY PERCEIVE EFFECTIVE RTG ACTION AGAINST ANTI-GUB INSURGENTS, THE BURMESE ARE NOT LIKELY TO FIND IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THAILAND ACCEPTABLE; IF AND WHEN THEY DO PERCEIVE SUCH ACTION, OUR INTERCESSION WOULD BE UNNECESSARY SINCE THE BURMESE WOULD PREFER TO DO THEIR OWN NEGOTIATING. MOREOVER, THE BURMESE MIGHT WELL VIEW

ANY ACTIVE INTERCESSION BY THE U.S. IN THAI-BURMA  
RELATIONS AS AN RTG PLOY FURTHER TO ENGAGE THE USG IN  
POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THAILAND.  
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